



# The Rhumb Line

## Maine Maritime Museum

Summer 2004

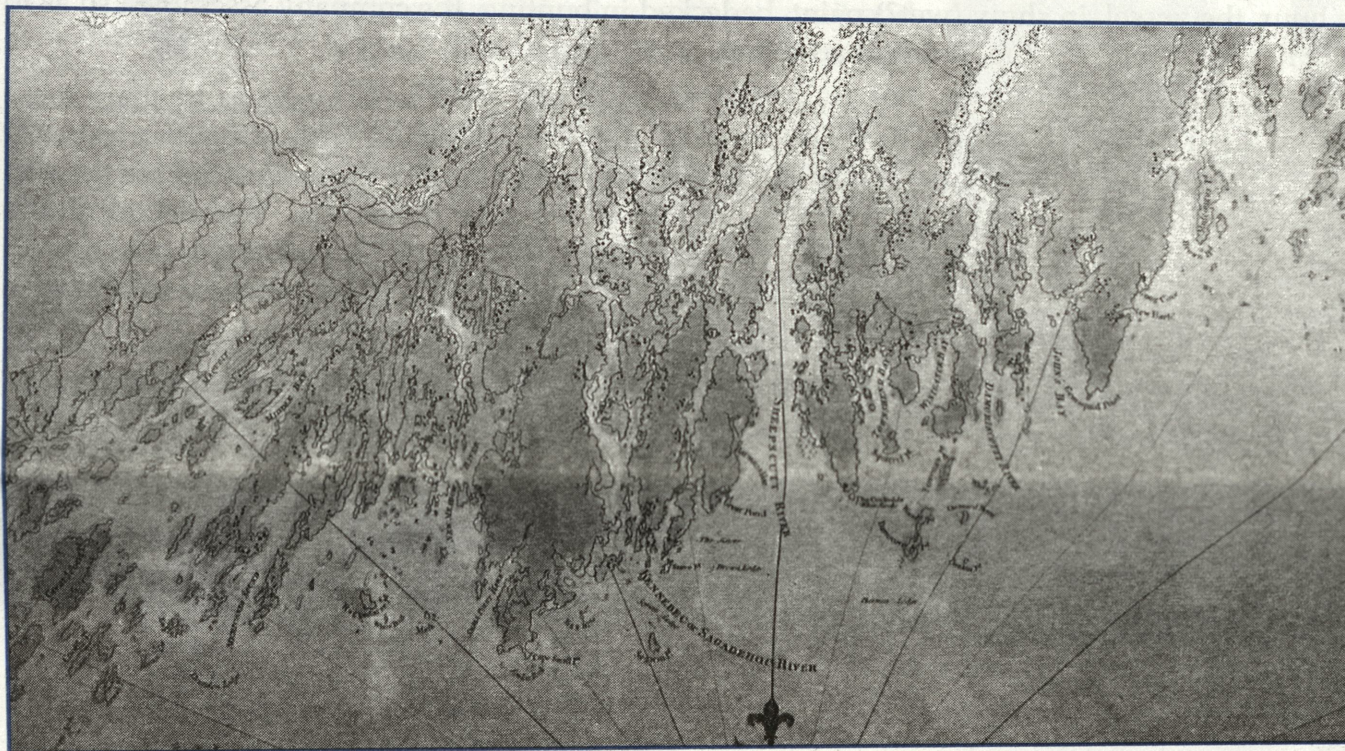
*Explore Maine's Maritime History Where It Began!*

Number 38

## Rainbow over Witchcastle

**Thomas R. Wilcox, Jr., Executive Director**

This is the story of an aggressive, if not rash, action by an opportunistic Royal Navy frigate captain on the Maine coast during the Revolutionary War. It is truly just of footnote significance in the grand scheme of our War for Independence and it is typical of many local histories of the war – particularly along the New England coast. But, to a modern sailor it is an amazing feat of ship-handling skill and the story hinges on the kind of luck an experienced mariner acknowledges only with a knock on wood.



A rare chart in the Museum collections of Casco Bay, The Kennebec and Sheepscot Rivers and part of Muscongus Bay, published in London as part of *The Atlantic Neptune*, an eighteenth century atlas of marine charts, this one the work of Swiss cartographer Joseph F. W. Des Barres, and dated April 24, 1776.

On September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1777, His Majesty's ship *Rainbow*, 44 guns, was ranging south along the Maine coast from her base in Halifax in order to, as a chronicler would later describe it, "annoy the enemy."<sup>1</sup> That day her captain had spoken to a fisherman who indicated that a ship was loading masts up the Sheepscot River bound for France. The fisherman "agreed" to pilot the frigate thereto, presumably so as not to be himself "annoyed." With pilot on board and the afternoon wearing on, the frigate turned north and began her approach to the Sheepscot. The weather must have been marginal at this point, based on what happens next, and one can only imagine

what might have been nervous-making signs: overcast skies, possibly that particular luminescence characteristic of the very worst of autumn weather to come.

Sunset on this date is approximately six o'clock p.m. and it would be pitch dark at seven. *Rainbow* could only have been making this approach with the wind from the southern quadrant (southwest to southeast) and the captain would have at least preferred if not required a flood tide. Seguin Island would stand out prominently to the west and Damariscove and Fisherman's Islands would be in plain sight to the dark-

ening east. The presumably familiar coastline from the Kennebec River mouth to Townsend (now Boothbay Harbor) was spread out to port and starboard ahead. The off-shore shoals in this area – now called The Sisters, The Black Rocks and, farther in, Griffith Head Ledge – are arranged so as to provide a nice wide entrance and they can be clearly seen at most tides in most sea conditions except flat calm. *Rainbow* did, after all, have a pilot aboard to help steer clear of these hazards.

Heaving up on the ocean swell, pressing northward into the river under topsails and possibly the fore course, the watch on deck could see the surf on the beach that is now Reid State Park on Georgetown to port and The Cuckholds at the tip of Cape Newagen Island (now Southport) to starboard. Back in the after-guard on the quarterdeck the captain, likely in his best blue uniform coat with the two epaulettes befitting a post captain with more than three years seniority, would be joined by two of his lieutenants, the sailing master, a master's mate or two at the wheel and the civilian pilot. On the forecastle the 3<sup>rd</sup> lieutenant, boatswain and a gang would undoubtedly be standing by at least one of the anchors that by now would be swinging from a cathead with sufficient cable up on deck from the tier below ready to let go. The rest of the 280 men of the ship's company would be arranged as necessary to handle sail. The

(continued on page 3)

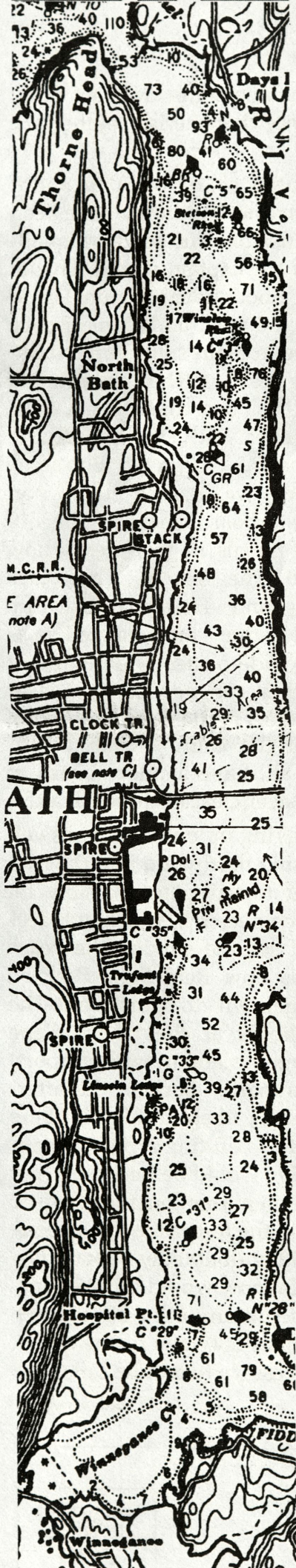
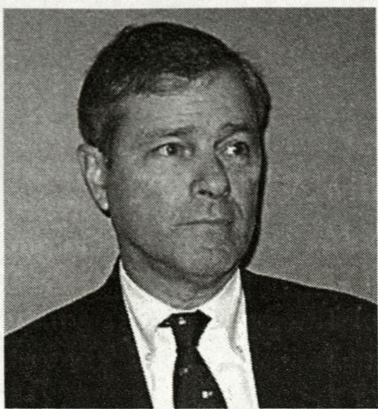
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## From The Chart Table

This past weekend, 50 or 60 people gathered here to christen Mike Kiernan's new boat *Sagadahoc* that will be the Museum's excursion vessel this summer. It was a lovely spring day, high noon, the trees over on the Arrowsic shore resplendent in their brand new pale green. It was an event like most of them in my experience: some good and thankful words; a blessing; the breaking of some bubbly over the bow; even a cannon shot! And thus, an inanimate object was given life, as it were, and isn't it the case that after the moment of christening we never think of boats or ships or most watercraft the way we think of the equivalent mass of wood, steel or fiberglass in some other form?

Earlier this spring, the *Nitze*, Bath Iron Work's latest guided missile destroyer, was christened (words, blessing, bubbly). A short while ago, another big tug splashed into the Sheepscot River from Washburn and Doughty's yard in East Boothbay. In June, the South Bristol Eighth Grade will perform much the same words and deeds as they launch their two Susan Skiffs, built over the course of the school year here at the Museum, into the harbor at South Bristol. I suspect that along the entire Maine Coast this season all manner of craft will enter the water for the first time or for the first time in a new guise and that many of us will be invited to share in these ceremonies of affirmation.

These are very positive bits of theater filled with words and thoughts about dignity, beauty, strength, endurance and perseverance. "Fair winds and following seas." "Bless those that sail in her." Even for small craft it is worth wishing for the safe delivery of their occupants when the day is done, let alone those of a man of war or a fishing boat. And, of course, there is the lady of the hour, the vessel, in shiny (wet?) paint, bedecked in bunting, the company assembled so as to make her unmistakably the center of attention.

We should be thankful to those owners and builders and crew who invite us to share these moments with them - one of the two dates forever and ever associated with a boat or a yacht or a ship. I think those of us in attendance do, in fact, add something to the event. We are the witnesses. We see the fruits of long hours of skillful labor. We hear the words. We bow our heads in respect. We applaud the wonder of it. We can hardly resist forcefully wishing for a safe and successful life for the vessel, its passengers and crew. It's almost as if we are allowed to help give it a shove.

To all you shipbuilders and boatbuilders, ship owners and boat owners, thanks for inviting us to your launchings and christenings. You do us a huge honor. Fair winds!

*Tom*

Thomas R. Wilcox, Jr.  
Executive Director

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Editor in Chief: Thomas R. Wilcox, Jr.

Contributors: Ellen Conner, Sue Drumm,  
Nathan Lipfert, Jason Morin,  
Barbara Potter

Composing/Printing: *The Times Record*

**Maine Maritime Museum**  
243 Washington Street  
Bath, ME 04530

207-443-1316

FAX 207-443-1665

[www.mainemaritimemuseum.org](http://www.mainemaritimemuseum.org)

e-mail: [maritime@bathmaine.com](mailto:maritime@bathmaine.com)



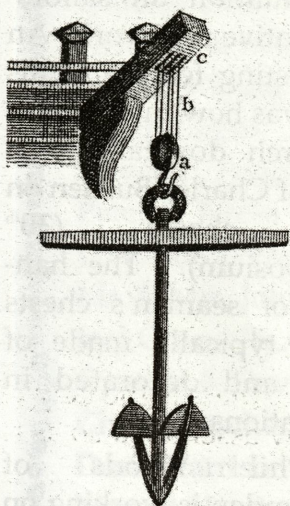


# Rainbow over Witchcastle (continued from page 1)

ship could clear for action if required in very short order. The Marine detachment of 40 or so in their red coats and white crossed belts would be standing by ready to dissuade any attempt to interfere with the King's business.

Let's pause for a moment to meet two of the cast of characters.

*Rainbow* herself was built by Carter at Limehouse Reach on the Thames River in London between March, 1746 and May, 1747. She was a Fifth Rate ship of the line - a so-called two-decker - and carried 44 guns on three levels: twenty 18 pounders on the gun deck; twenty 9 pounders on the upper deck; and four 6 pounders on the quarterdeck. She was 133' long, was 37' 6" broad, and had 16' depth of hold. She measured 814 tons. Ship rigged, her sail plan would have been typical of the period: large courses (the lower square sails) on the main and foremasts, together with massive topsails and royals. A fore and aft rigged spanker would be on the mizzenmast together with a topsail and royal. She would have studding sails that could be rigged outboard of the courses and topsails in the most favorable of breezes. Skysails could likely be rigged atop the royals on the fore and main. In addition to at least three headsails, she could have rigged a square sail on a sprit from the jibboom. She was steered by double tandem steering wheels aft on the quarterdeck just forward of a short aft cabin



A catted anchor from A Young Sea Officer's Sheet Anchor by Darcy Lever, originally published in London in 1819.

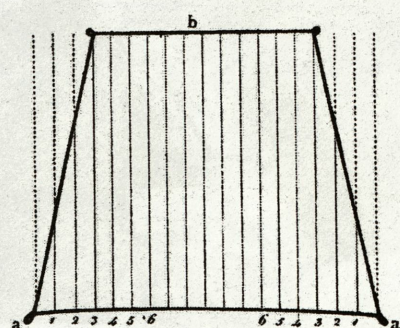
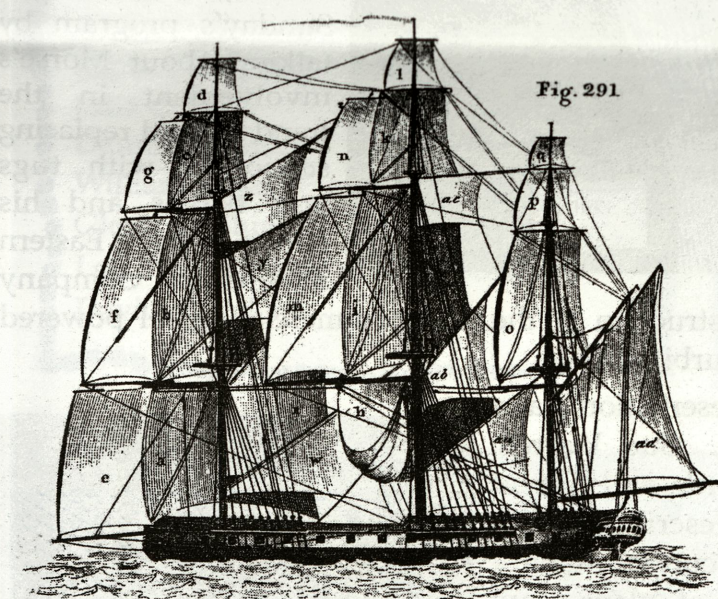


Fig. 293

Another drawing from A Young Officer's Sheet Anchor showing a man o' war's sails. From bottom to top: courses, topsails, topgallants, royal topgallants. The fore-and-aft lower sail on the mizzen (aftermost) mast is the spanker or driver. The smaller drawing shows two sprit sails rigged below the bowsprit and jibboom.

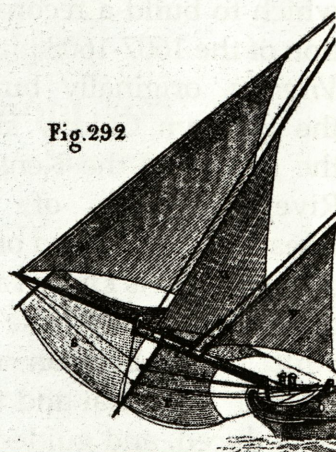
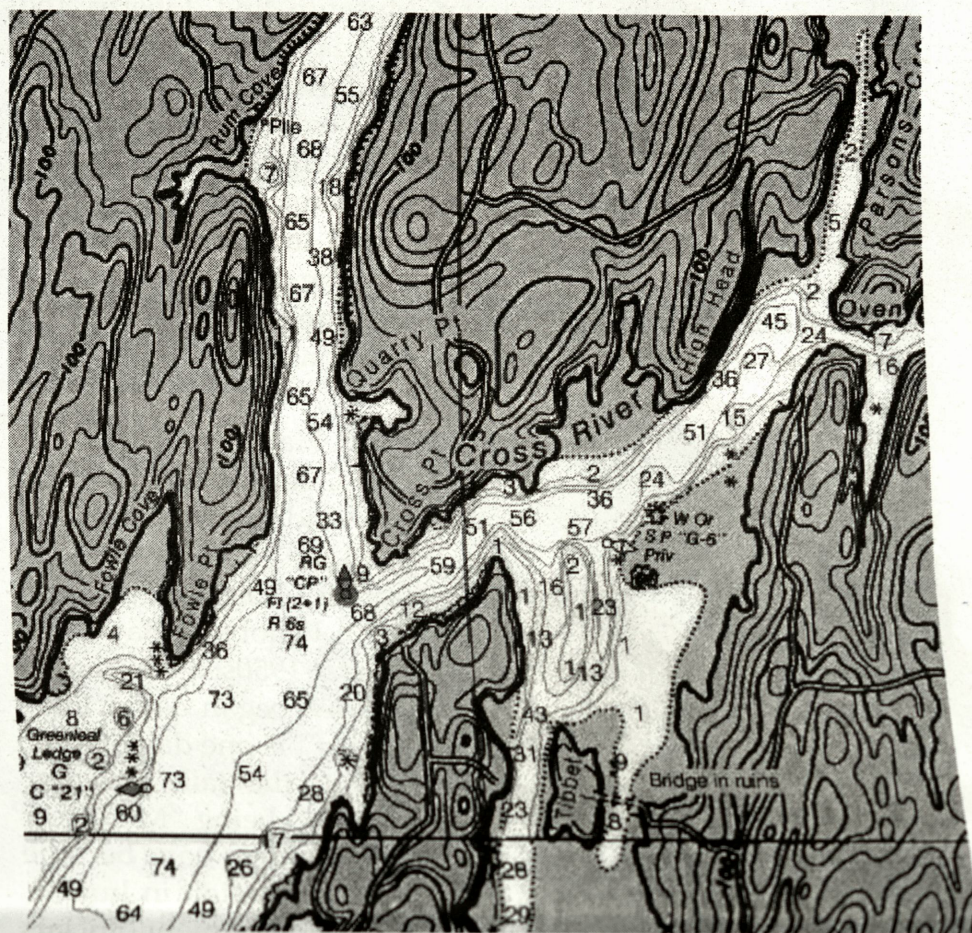


Fig. 292

that was above the great cabin below. *Rainbow's* stern presented two rows of windows surrounded by impressive stern carvings. She was 30 years old at the time of this event. If she was commanded at all capably her maneuverability (sail handling) and her gunnery would have been superb; the Royal Navy at this time was second to none.

Her commander, Captain Sir George Collier was 9 years his ship's senior, having been born in London in 1738. He entered the Naval Service as a 13 year old lad in 1751, most likely as a



Modern chart showing the junction of the Sheepscoot River and the Cross River. The Oven's Mouth is at the extreme right hand side.

midshipman. He was promoted to captain in 1762 at the ripe old age of 24. Collier was knighted in 1775 and had seen service with the North American Squadron at least since the outbreak of war with the Colonies. He was at the Battle of Long Island in August, 1776, convoying Hessian mercenaries to support British troops. Afterwards, Lord Howe sent him to Halifax to command the Nova Scotia station in September of that year. The following summer had been a good one thus far, Collier and *Rainbow* having captured the American frigate *Hancock*, 34 guns, in July. It was fresh from this success that Sir George initiated his sortie up the Sheepscoot.

This is where modern mariners should take note.

Just after dark, the ship was overtaken by a violent storm or squall (hurricane?) with high winds and rain. It was hard to see the shore even though by now the river had narrowed to less than a mile. Presumably under shortened sail and with unimaginable steadiness on the part of her captain, helmsmen and sail trimmers, *Rainbow* rushed on through the gloom until Lady Luck entered the picture big time. One can only but imagine the scene: pitch dark, loom from the compass binnacle in front of now certainly two helmsmen, the crash and roar of waves and wind, the ship heeling under the press of sail, hands at sheets and braces, tending the heavy, wet canvas.

At some point, Captain Collier was certain the course was wrong (too much east) and he challenged the pilot who admitted he was totally lost - he had no idea where he was.

At that instant, Collier ordered the anchor let go. It's not hard

(continued on page 6)



## 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Maritime History Symposium, April 30 – May 2, 2004

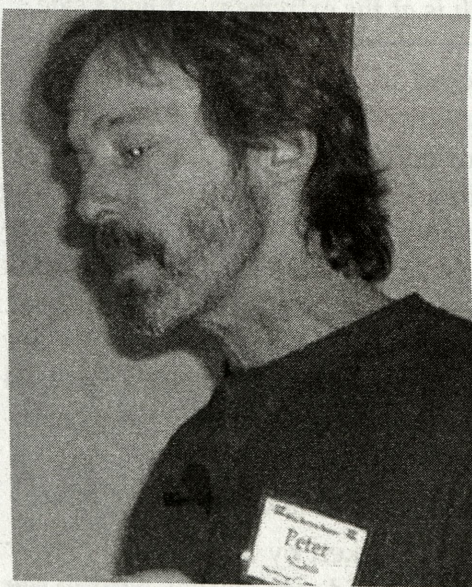
The 62 participants and speakers of the annual Symposium began their weekend with the opening reception of the Museum's new exhibit, "Distant Lands of Palm and Spice": *Maine Ships and Mariners in Deepwater Commerce*. Guests who attended that evening only for the exhibit festivities were graciously invited to partake of the Symposium's traditional Fish House Punch, and they did. Although the recipe was slightly changed this year, by the end of the evening it was all gone.

Skip Brack of the Davistown Museum and Liberty Tool Company led off the program on Saturday with a presentation on the Maine shipbuilding industry and the edged tools used in the building trades. Illustrated with two tables of tools from his collection (a Symposium first?), Skip discussed types and sources of steel, and large and small manufacturers of tools in Maine, in the Canadian Maritimes, and in other parts of the United States. He took listeners through the development of tool manufacture, from bog iron to bar iron, and from welded steel edge tools through cast steel edge and all cast steel to drop forged tools.



Julian Hatch, a retired U.S. Coast Guard Chief Warrant Officer and master story teller, regaled the audience with stories of his Coast Guard experiences in Penobscot Bay in the 1940s and 1950s. Nearly all of the stories began as an interruption of his one day off each week, but the talk was prevented from being "My career

as an interruption of my social life" which it might have become in less skillful hands. Each story was an education in human nature, crime prevention, or the attitude of government officials towards the young Coast Guardsmen.



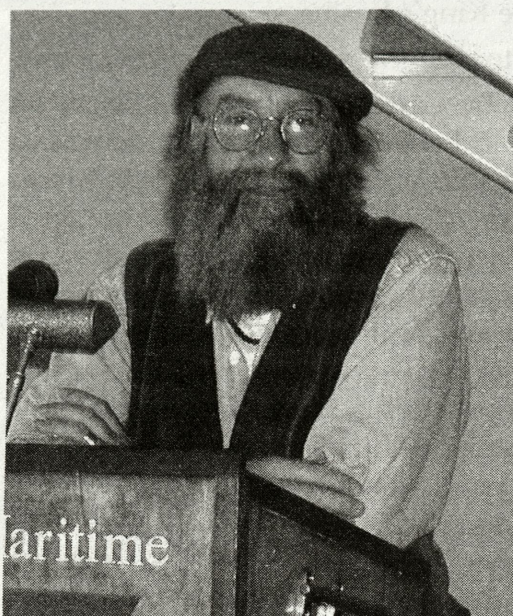
Author Peter Nichols was the first of four speakers whose talk related to a recent or future book. He delved into his research process in the creation of *Evolution's Captain*, a biography of Captain Robert FitzRoy of H.M.S. *Beagle*. His interest in FitzRoy actually grew out of his curiosity about how the perceived failure of FitzRoy's experiment in civilizing a small group of Tierra del Fuego natives led to FitzRoy's hiring

of naturalist Charles Darwin for future voyaging in *Beagle*.

Revell Carr, former director of Mystic Seaport, also talked about the origins of his book, *All Brave Sailors*. In his case it was an artifact – the small jolly boat of the freighter *Anglo Saxon*, long in the collection at Mystic Seaport and now returned to England. The stirring nature of the boat led him to research the crew of the *Anglo Saxon*, especially the

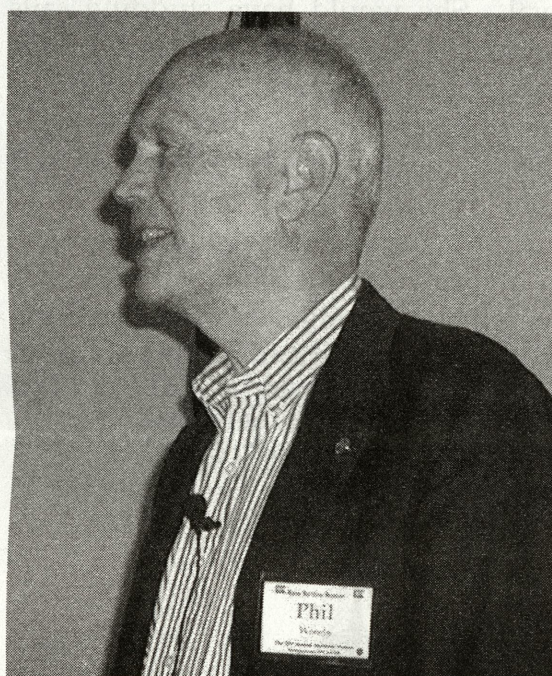


seven who attempted to reach safety in this boat, and the crew and captain of the German raider which attacked the freighter.



Des Pawson, professional ropeworker and author on knots and decorative and utilitarian ropework, represented England admirably in his presentation on sailors' decorative ropework. An interesting feature of his talk was how much of his research dovetails with that of Charles Burden on sea chests (30<sup>th</sup> Symposium). The handles of seamen's chests were typically made of rope and decorated in

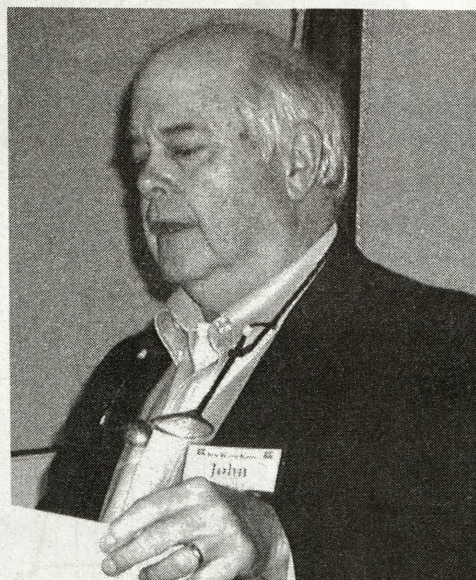
knots, something apparent in both presentations.



Phil Woods of Camden is working on a biography of financier Charles W. Morse. Faced with an audience who already knew many Charles W. Morse stories (more than a few had attended Bath's Morse High School), Phil began Sunday's program by talking about Morse's involvement in the trend toward replacing schooners with tugs and barges and his efforts to build Eastern Steamship Company

and the construction of the first commercial vessel powered with steam turbines.

The last presentation was a group effort. Bud Warren, John Bradford, and David Wyman described the process and current state of the creation of plans from which to build a reconstruction of the 1607-1608 pinnacle *Virginia*, originally built at the Popham Colony site at the mouth of the Kennebec River. Much of their research has focussed on one of the few facts known about the vessel – that she was built by a London shipwright. With that and the other facts which are known or can be deduced, and guided by Coast Guard construction rules for passenger vessels, the speakers and other have crafted a design for a reconstruction. Following successful fundraising, the vessel will be built on Maine Maritime Museum property.



Stay tuned for news of the 2005 Symposium. We will do our best to get the program pulled together earlier next year!



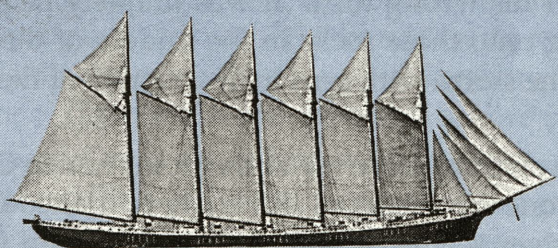
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A good time was had by all at Sagadahoc's christening. The 50' converted Navy surplus utility boat will be the Museum's new excursion vessel. Owned and operated by Long Reach Cruises, the boat has been repowered, has had a head and a snack bar installed, and has a canopy and complete weather curtains. (There's even heat!) Captain Mike Kiernan (Right), president of the company, gives some remarks at the May 15<sup>th</sup> event. Kiernan's daughter, Kathleen, was the vessel's sponsor.



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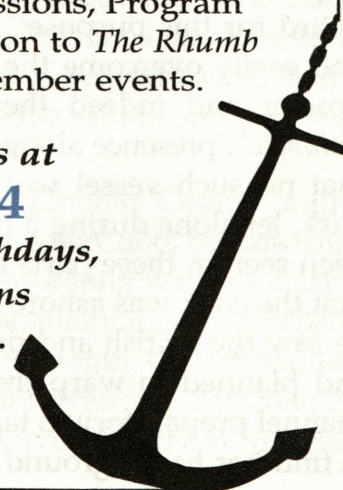
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# Rainbow over Witchcastle (continued from page 3)

to conjure the sound of his voice or that of his first lieutenant thundering forward in the dark like a shot to the forecandle with that most urgent of commands. The anchor splashes. The cable runs out. It holds. The ship swings around and comes to rest what must seem to the crew like only feet from swaying, wind-lashed trees. If this were a screenplay we would call for lightning and thunder at this moment. *Rainbow* has managed what, in broad daylight, would seem clearly a turn to starboard into the Cross River at the northern tip of Barter's Island and then a progression of about a mile to just short of a tiny, swift-current cut called the Oven's Mouth. THAT is where *Rainbow* came to anchor! It is just after midnight.

Gathering his wits, and intensely focused on his mission, Collier orders two of his lieutenants to take 100 men in two boats and proceed back out to the river and on up to press the attack on the mast ship. (Is it possible that this author is the only one these days who hears at this point Jack Aubrey exclaim, "There's not a moment to lose?")

These worthies make the dog-leg left and right turn at the northern tip of Jeremy Squam Island (now Westport) at dawn and steal past the still-sleeping village of Witchcastle (or Wiscasset) undetected. Three miles north of the village, in the narrow headwaters of the Sheepscot (two miles north of the present railroad trestle), the British find the mast ship *Gruel*,

scene and gathering on the 100' heights above, the *Rainbows* began to worry about their plight.

In the meantime, with the coming of daylight, Sir George must have once again thanked his lucky stars before turning the rest of his crew to the task of getting *Rainbow* out of the Cross River and up the Sheepscot to render assistance to his raiding party. Again, the seamanship, the EFFORT, required to maneuver this large, sea-going warship in such narrow confines must

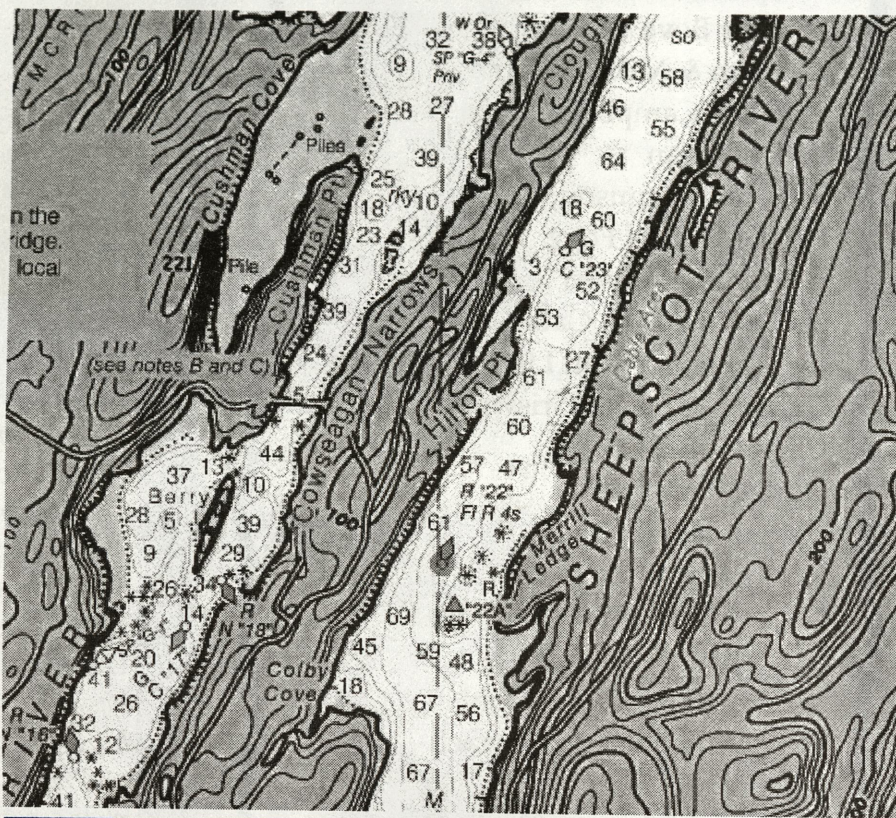
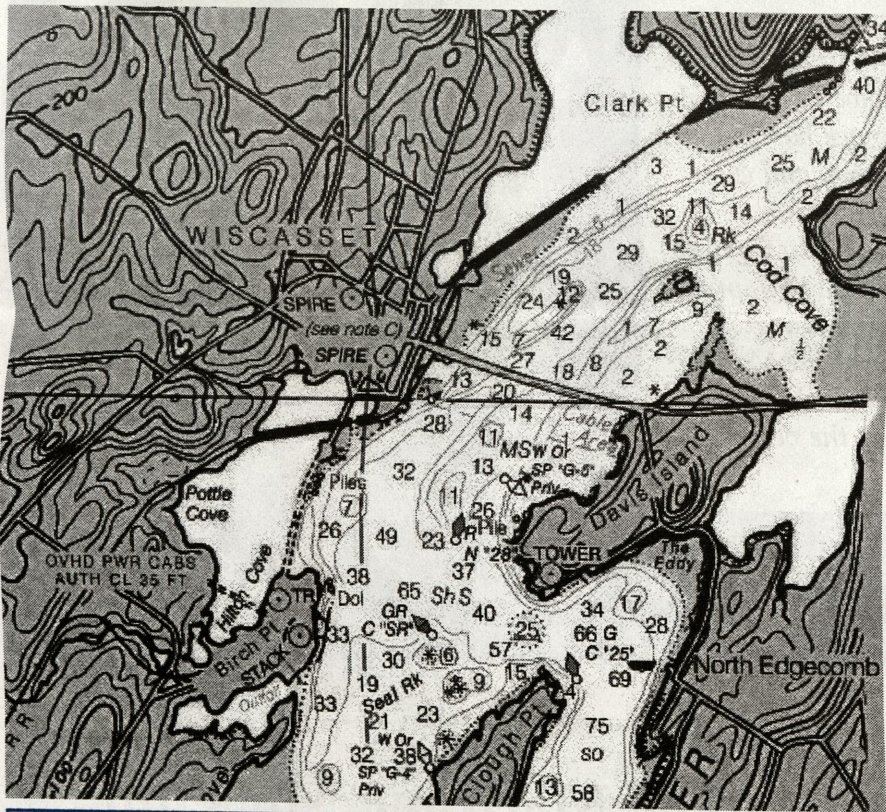


Chart showing what is now called Merrill Ledge, in effect narrowing the width of the Sheepscot at this point in half.



Modern chart of the town of Wiscasset (Witchcastle in our story). Both the raiding party and ultimately *Rainbow* would have come up the Sheepscot along the North Edgecomb shore and had to turn west to clear Davis Island. *Rainbow* anchored in front of the village while the boats went farther up the river to the upper right.

Captain Joseph Proctor, chartered by the Massachusetts War Board for this purpose<sup>2</sup>. Captain and a small crew are asleep and easily overcome the armed seamen. It turns out Captain Proctor and indeed the whole village were very aware of *Rainbow*'s presence along the coast but were secure in the belief that no such vessel would attempt a passage upriver in the dark, let alone during a fierce storm the likes of which had not been seen in these parts for twenty years<sup>3</sup>. It was also the case that the cook was ashore for the evening and when he returned he saw the British and promptly raised the alarm. The sailors had planned to warp the *Gruel* out into the narrow, twisting channel preparatory to taking her to sea but were disappointed to find her hard aground. With the local militia rushing to the

instill respect for skills long since a thing of the past. It took more than 150 men just to haul the anchor of such a vessel: approximately 12 on the forecandle; 80 on the capstan bars; 15 leading the cable along the gundeck; and, 50 or so organizing the slimy, wet thing in the cable tier or orlop deck below. This would have occupied nearly all those that remained aboard *Rainbow*, and it was likely a desperate thing.

In the forenoon, *Rainbow* finally arrived off Wiscasset and anchored. On the way up, Collier passed by the rocks now known as Merrill Ledge and again must have thanked Providence for his wrong turn. It was unlikely he could have avoided piling onto these rocks in the middle of the night and the height of the storm with certain destruction of the vessel the result.

Looking at a chart of the river at the point where Cross River branches off, one can imagine the contemporaneous explanation that the river seemed to branch in three, with the middle the correct way. The right hand branch would be the Cross River and the left hand "branch" is, in reality, a shallow cove today called Fowle Cove. With modern aids to navigation, including lighted buoys, it would be hard to make this mistake. In September of 1777 in the dark of night, during a storm, with extreme concern for the safety of one's vessel and people, one can see how it could happen.

Sir George, under a flag of truce sends the following message to the town's chief judge, one Thomas Rice:

To the inhabitants of the town of Witchcastle.

Sir George Collier, commanding His Majesty's ship *Rainbow*, signifies to the inhabitants of Witchcastle, that he has no intentions of injuring their persons or property, unless from their improper behaviour they compel him to

(continued on page 7)



# Rainbow over Witchcastle (continued from page 6)

do so: the ship loading in this river with masts for His Majesty's enemies, is the object of his present attention: and the inhabitants of Witchcastle must not by any means obstruct his seizing and carrying her down the river, as they value the safety of their town; Sir George therefore recommends to them not assemble the militia, or other armed men; since the doing so can answer no purpose, except bringing on hostilities that may probably end in the destruction of the town: though such measure will be very contrary to his intentions and wishes. . . .

Sir George went on to demand that the town give up the two cannons he knew to be in its possession as well as the sails and masts of the ship. He also required two "respectable inhabitants" to remain on board as hostages until the matter was resolved.

Dr. Thomas Rice, thought to be Wiscasset's first physician, graduated from Harvard College in 1756. He also studied the law and became a justice of the Court of common Pleas. A man of substance in the community, he would later be a delegate to the convention forming the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as well as to the convention ratifying the United States Constitution in 1788. On this 10<sup>th</sup> day of September, 1777, he replied to Captain Sir George Collier as follows:

I acknowledge the receipt of a message by a flag of truce from Sir George Collier, which respects the inhabitants of Witchcastle as well as myself, but as I was inquired after particularly, by the flag, I think it proper to make this short answer in a private capacity, until I can consult the inhabitants and know their minds, which cannot be done till tomorrow. The ship Sir George demands, is near four miles from hence, and in the possession of his men, (as I hear,) with one of the pieces of cannon he requires; the other is carried off, but where I cannot learn. The rigging and sails of said ship I have never seen, and know not where they are; and believe there are no masts but are at or near the said ship. This being the case, I think we must stand fairly excused in Sir George's own mind from giving hostages for the performance of what is not in our power.

I am Sir George's very humble servant,

Thomas Rice

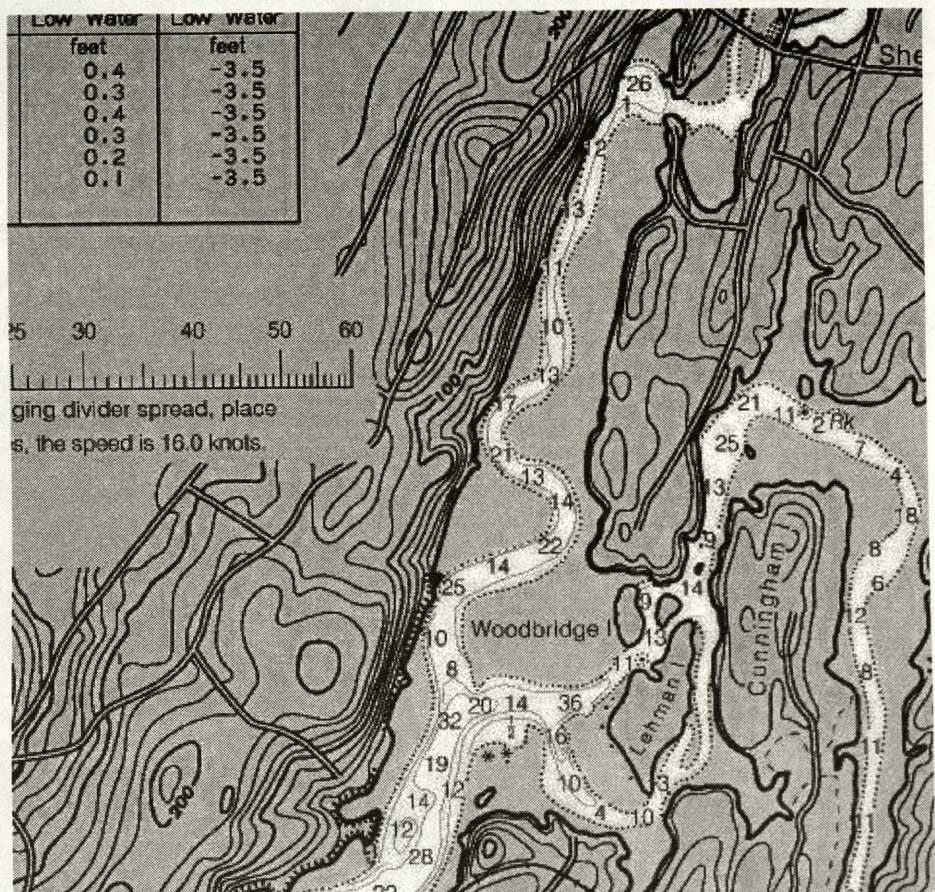
Witchcastle 10<sup>th</sup> September, 1777.

It was one Timothy Parsons, who represented the Massachusetts War Board in the loading of masts for France, who had supplied Captain Proctor with a three-pound cannon for the *Gruel*'s defense while it was alongshore as well as eight small arms.<sup>4</sup> The cannon was mounted ashore on high ground.

Back aboard *Gruel*, the sailors were beginning to take a beating from the militia gathering in greater and greater numbers. They had taken the cannon aboard but there was no ammunition with which to load it. The *Rainbows* removed planks that were part of the cargo and erected a barricade on the landward side of the ship behind which to duck as they were beginning to take musket fire from the militia.

It is Parson's account that states that Rice was in favor of honoring Collier's demands possibly for reasons other than simply fearing for the safety of the town when he states in a letter written later to Captain Proctor:

Thomas Rice, Esq. Being one of the Committee Received the flag and was for Complying with Sir George's demand and did what in him lay to discourag [sic] the people from defending Your Ship [*Gruel*]. . . . Said Rice answered Sir George him Self and begged to have till the next Morning to give him a final answer, but was on Board twice that day Confering with him. Rice went Up the River in the evening



This a modern chart showing the Sheepscot about three miles north of Wiscasset, where the mast ship *Gruel* would have been moored. Note the high ground along the western shore from which the militia could harry the British sailors.

to endeavour with his jesuitical Smoothness to perswaid the people thens to deliver Up Your Ship, or at least not to defend her, but he Rec'd an Answer that was proper for honist and brave men to give - . . .<sup>5</sup>

The town was known to have some Tory sympathizers or at least "neutralists"<sup>6</sup> and *Rainbow* was certainly the epitome of the means to destroy the town. But the regional militia were carrying the day and the *Rainbow* raiders who were hunkered down in *Gruel* were in for some annoyance of their own.

By two in the afternoon, a cannon shell burst through the barricade causing the sailors to dig further into the cargo in the hold to withstand more firepower than their plank wall was able to provide. In fact, old Timothy Parsons had gone back to town to fetch the other three pounder together with 15 rounds of shot and saw to it that it was dragged up to the scene of the battle.

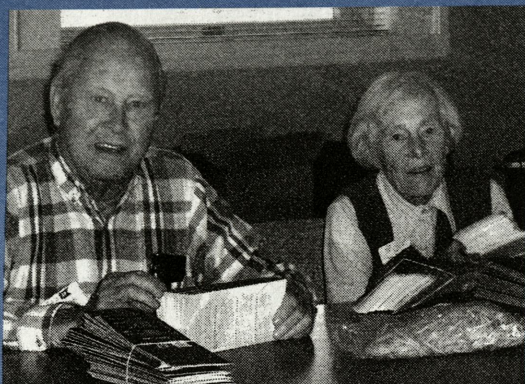
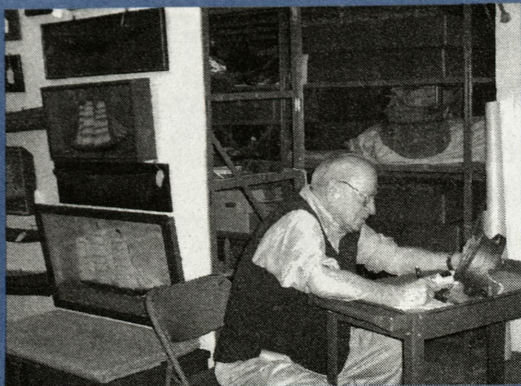
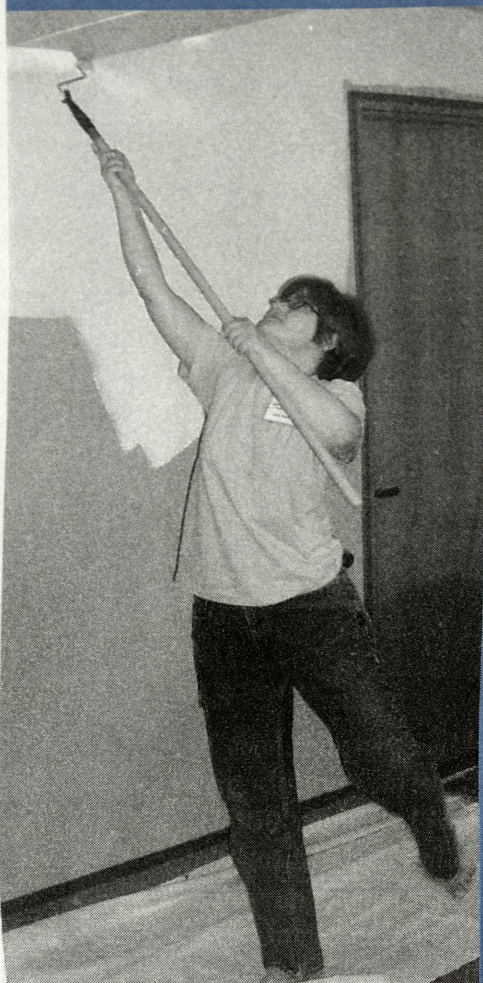
The *Rainbows* waited until after dark to make their hasty retreat. They were relieved to find that their boats were undamaged (probably because they had been tied along the river side of the ship). They drilled a number of holes in the mast ship to scuttle her and then rigged hammocks along the sides of the boats. The militia sensed their departure and kept taking pot shots at them all the way down the river, including while some of the sailors had to get out of the boats to cut a line attached to a log boom that was being dragged across the channel into the boats' way. (The next day, they would pick more than 200 musket balls from the hammocks.) In all, the sailors only had three or four wounded out of 100.

The entire Third Regiment of the Lincoln County militia, under the command of Colonel Samuel McCobb, by now numbered three thousand and *Rainbow* was a long way from safety. McCobb and Collier had had some acquaintance at Townsend (Boothbay Harbor) where the previous month, Collier had been quite ruthless with his mission of "annoyance." McCobb had positioned his troops down the river, particularly atop what is

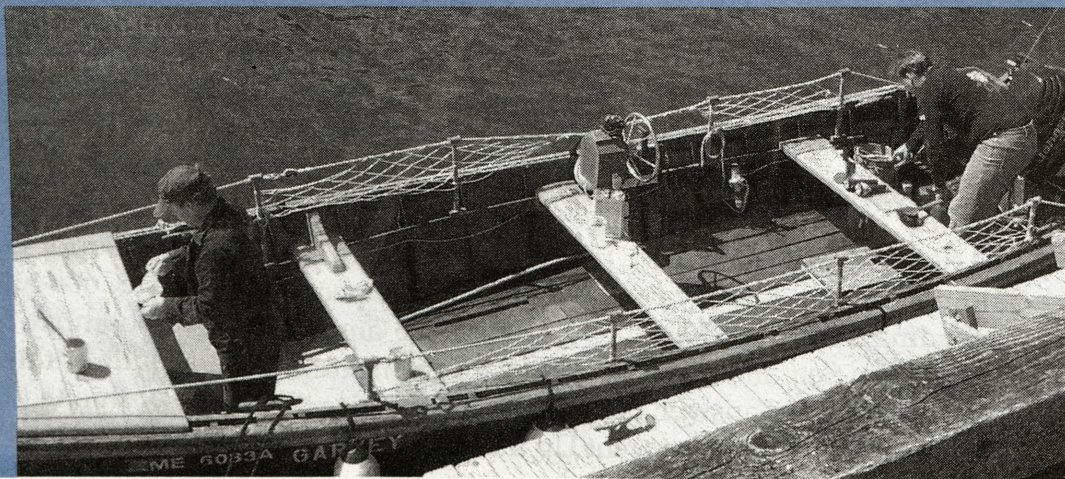
(continued on page 9)



# Quartermaster's Day - May 8<sup>th</sup>



Clockwise from upper left: Cathy Matero artfully wielding her roller; Roy Wheeler catalogs an artifact; Buzz and Tina Sawhill cheerfully stuff envelopes; Gerry Orem and her little friend Oskar Matero pat mulch; Hank Horn (left), Dave Boulette (partially obscured) and Jack Conner (completely obscured) attend to a foundation; Katharine Bell, Karen Smith, Andrea Conner and others rake and sweep; Tad Lyford and Jason Morin paint garvey thwarts; Doug Hamlin paints a deck; Mary Maverick shows her own roller routine.

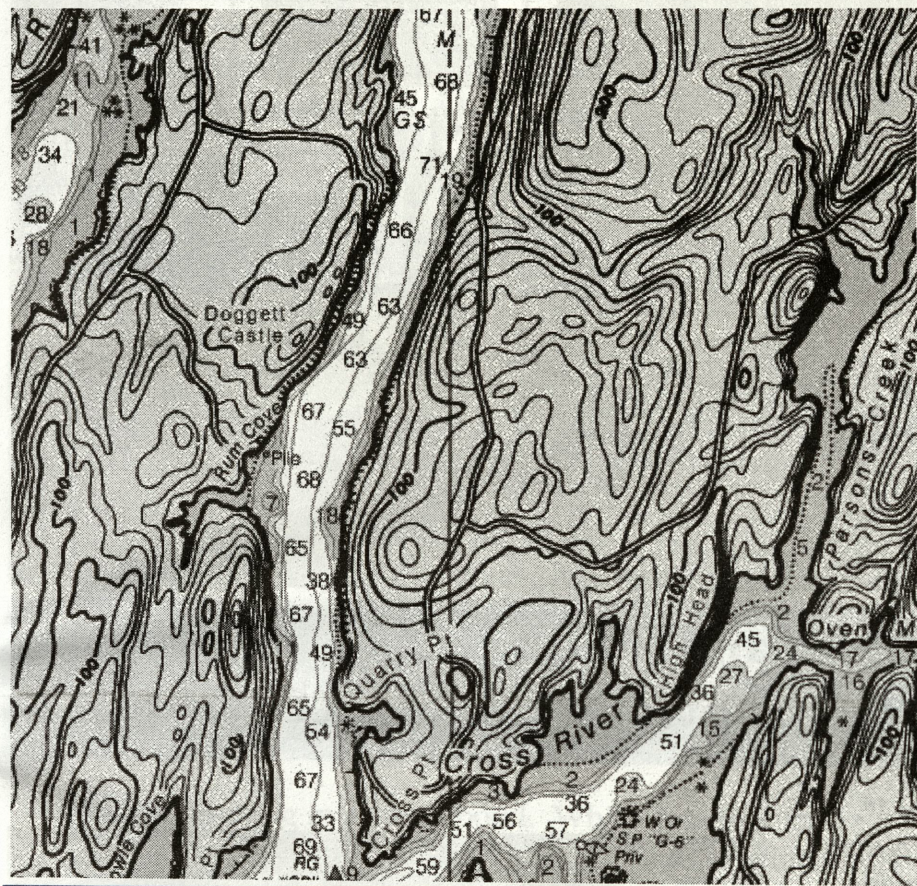




# Rainbow over Witchcastle (continued from page 7)

still known as Doggett's Castle, a tall rock wall on Jeremy Squam's (Wesport's) Sheepscot shore, about a mile north of the Cross River, below which *Rainbow* would have to pass on her way back to sea. This cliff is named after Captain Samuel Doggett (1685 - 1745) who was said to have anchored his vessel, called *Dolphin*, here when trading with the local Indians. His trading partners could only approach his ship by canoe and, as a result, he called this place his "castle."

While *Rainbow* waited for favorable winds and tides, Collier and the townsfolk discussed the terms of his safe passage down river. Each side seemed to feel strength in its position: the militia could at the very least harry the frigate while she was in the river with potentially severe effect; Sir George certainly had the



Doggett Castle on Westport's eastern shore. Lore has it that Captain Samuel Doggett (1685 - 1745) would moor his trading vessel here so that his customers could only arrive by canoe. He called this place his "castle."

firepower to reduce the town to smoldering rubble. In the end, a stalemate was recognized. Sir George, who had previously captured at least one schooner (*Spry*) belonging to a local person, and who had heretofore refused to return it, did so before he left. He also released the *Gruel*'s crew and some masts that had floated down river. Northerly breezes propelled him back down to the Gulf of Maine and a somewhat fruitless and very dangerous mission for Collier, and a harrowing time for the town came to a close.

Sir George raised some more Cain burning or otherwise destroying fifteen or so small vessels in the vicinity of Damariscotta. In November, Collier led a faint raid on Machias, without the support of any ground troops, and succeeded in only temporary disruption of this center of rebel mischief. The following summer, 1778, with *Rainbow* again along the coast, Collier heard of another mast ship loading in the Sheepscot. Indeed, a boat with 80 sailors and Marines from the *Rainbow*, under cover of poor visibility captured the 500 ton French ship *Marquis de la Fayette* with a cargo for Nantes already loaded. The prize was ordered to Halifax but was fallen upon by American warships which she evaded and sailed on to Portsmouth, England unscathed. In 1779, Sir George Collier

assumed command of the North American Squadron, presumably as admiral. In May of that year he led a naval force consisting of one 64, three smaller ships of the line and 30 frigates into Hampton Roads. There he took the cities of Portsmouth, Suffolk and Norfolk, Virginia with 2,500 troops under the command of Major-General Matthew. By the end of the month, more than 130 vessels had been taken or destroyed.

It was Sir George's fleet that sailed over the horizon at Castine in August of 1779, dooming the Penobscot Expedition to utter failure with the destruction of more than 40 American vessels. Collier later was to participate in the first Battle of Cape St. Vincent (1780) where he lost an arm. (In this battle, Sir George Brydges Rodney, who in 1749 had command of our *Rainbow*, engaged and defeated the Spanish Squadron under the command of Don Juan de Langara off Cape St. Vincent, Portugal.) George Collier had command of the Channel Fleet for a time, and he died in London in 1795 at the age of 57.

*Rainbow* was Sir George's flagship in the Elizabeth River, Virginia in '79 and went into reserve status some time thereafter. In 1782 she was returned to active duty and used for an experimental carronade armament. Carronades are short, squat guns that fire very heavy projectiles quite short distances but with devastating effect. Her original cannons were removed and replaced with 68 pounders on the gun deck; 42 pounders on the upper deck; and, 32 pounders on the quarterdeck. In September, 1782, she encountered the French frigate *Hebe*, 40 guns, that surrendered immediately after a demoralizing broadside, thinking she was being engaged by a disguised, much bigger ship of the line.

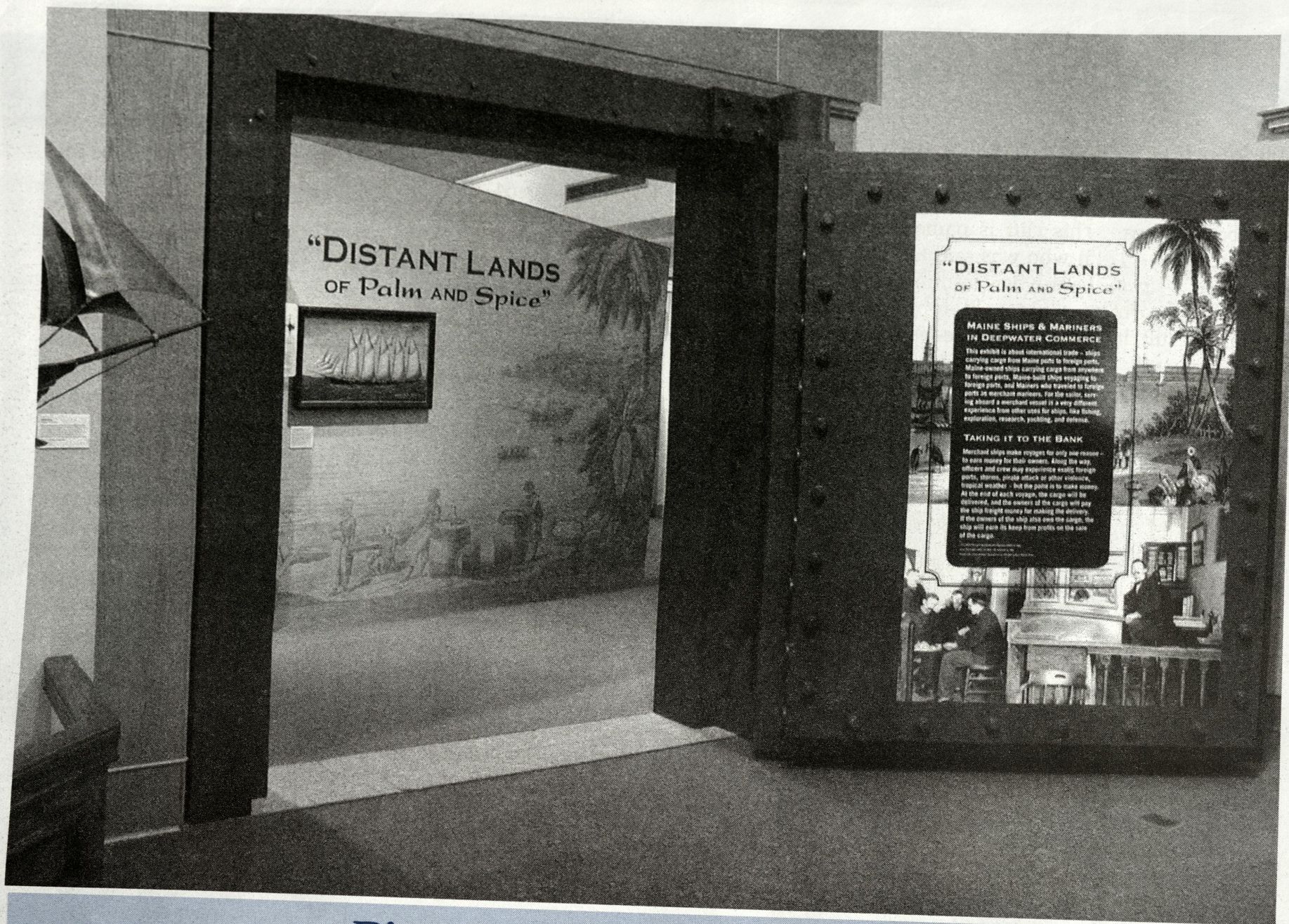
*Rainbow* was hulked in 1784, becoming a receiving ship in Woolwich for twenty years. She was sold out of the Navy in 1802.

**Author's Note:** The story presented here caught my attention because of the sheer audacity of this captain's venture up a narrow tidal river, at night, during a storm in wartime. In and of itself, it is a great yarn. The story is revealed in a few pages of a small rare book (117 pages), the title of which is *A Detail of Some Particular Services Performed in America, During the Years 1776, 1777, 1778, and 1779*. It is usually further described as "[c]ompiled from journals and original papers supposed to be chiefly taken from the journal kept on board of the ship *Rainbow*, commanded by Sir George Collier, while on the American station during that period: giving a minute account of many important attacks on towns and places, expeditions sent up rivers, skirmishes, negotiations, etc." It was printed in 1835 in New York for a man called Ithiel Town. Town had apparently acquired the manuscript while in London in 1830. The only reference I can find to Wiscasset ever being called Witchcastle is in Town's little book. Town quotes the correspondence between Captain Collier and Dr. Rice, as if from primary sources, BOTH of them referring to the town as Witchcastle.

Ithiel Town was a well-respected architect and civil engineer. He was born in Thompson, Connecticut in 1784 and died in New Haven in 1844. In partnership with Alexander Jackson Davis, Town designed, among many others: The New York Custom House (1833-42) and the Ohio and the North Carolina State Capitols. He should, perhaps, be best known for his patented design, in 1820, of the lattice truss bridge which became THE way to construct covered bridges around the country, many of which are still standing. He had a large collection of books on art and published several books on various subjects including this one. One other maritime book was

*(continued on page 11)*

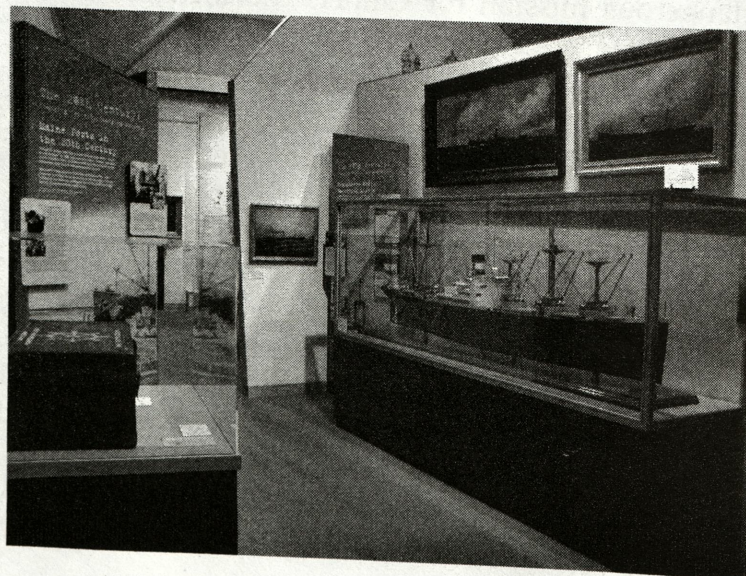
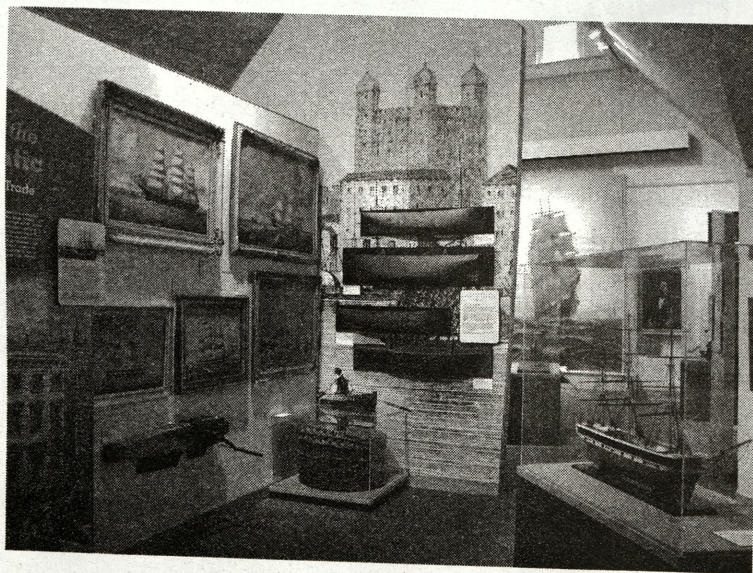




## Distant Lands of Palm and Spice: Maine Ships and Mariners in Deepwater Commerce

A new exhibit at Maine Maritime Museum opened to the public on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004. More than 150 people attended a preview opening ceremony the evening of April 30<sup>th</sup>, accompanied by fish house punch and the sweet smell of drying paint.

The exhibit explores Maine's involvement in international trade – voyages from Maine ports, in Maine vessels, or by Maine people. The exhibit emphasizes the human stories of deepwater voyaging, but never loses sight of the real purpose of the voyages – profit. The visitor enters and leaves the exhibit through a huge bank vault door. The exhibit, sponsored by Al Gordon, includes a specially-commissioned model by M.C. Wilkins Studio of the Maine-built clipper *Snow Squall* and historical "soundscapes" by Yves Feder. Also featured is the long-unseen, restored model of the freighter *Extavia*, in a new exhibit case. Exhibit designers Museum Design Associates, fabricators Westlake & West, and graphics people Advanced Photographic all helped create a wonderful exhibition that will be in place for years to come.





# Chef's Corner

## Char Grilled Lobster and Portobello Salad with Goat Cheese Croutons

### Marinade

- 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1 Tablespoon garlic
- 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- To taste, salt and pepper

### Dressing

- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1 Tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1 Tablespoon fresh basil, chiffonnade
- 2 teaspoons garlic
- 1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon ground mustard
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- To taste, salt and pepper
- Mixed greens
- 1/4 cup toasted pistachios
- 1 plum tomato
- 1 portobello mushroom
- 1 lobster tail, cooked and cleaned
- 1 each 3" baguette
- 1/3 cup goat cheese

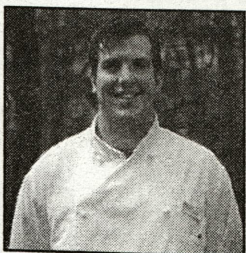
Make the marinade in a small bowl. Whisk together the vinegar and brown sugar until the sugar is completely dissolved. Whisk in the honey, garlic, and pepper flakes. Continue whisking and gradually add olive oil, whisking until thoroughly blended. Adjust seasoning with salt and fresh cracked black pepper. Marinate the portobello for five minutes.

Make the dressing in a small bowl. Whisk together the lemon juice and brown sugar until the sugar is completely dissolved. Whisk in the honey, basil, garlic, and mustards. Continue whisking and gradually add olive oil, whisking until thoroughly blended. Adjust seasoning with salt and fresh cracked black pepper.

Wash and dry the salad greens. Place in a bowl and add the pistachios. Drizzle the dressing over the greens, mixing well. Be careful not to bruise the greens. Transfer to a large bowl suitable for serving. Slice the tomato into 1/4" slices, approximately five pieces, discard the top and bottom. Place the tomatoes on the left side of the greens, shingling each piece.

Grill the mushroom for approximately two minutes on each side. Dredge the lobster tail in the remaining marinade and grill approximately two minutes on each side. Place the grilled mushroom in the center of the greens and place the lobster tail inside the mushroom.

Slice the baguette on the bias into two pieces. Evenly distribute the goat cheese onto each piece. Place in 350-degree convection oven until the goat cheese is golden brown. Lean the croutons on the lobster tail on the side opposite the tomatoes. Serve immediately.



*Thomas Breen, Food and Beverage Director and Executive Chef, Sebasco Harbor Resort, The Museum's Hospitality Partner.*



*Why not visit the Museum this summer by boat? Our new Visiting Yachtsman's building, only a few steps from our floats and moorings, contains clean, spacious bathrooms and showers and a complimentary washer/drier. Call the Museum at 207-443-1316, extension "0" to reserve a mooring.*



*Percy & Small's Mould Loft, seen just outside the McEvoy Gallery as one begins a tour of the historic buildings. The Mould Loft, the last of Percy & Small structures to be built (in 1917), contains a large (36+' by 70+'), unencumbered floor upon which the full-scale shapes of the vessels' major timbers could be drawn and to which shapes moulds or patterns could be fabricated from which to fashion the timbers themselves.*

## Rainbow over Witchcastle (continued from page 9)

called *Atlantic Steamships: On navigating the Ocean with Steamships of Large Tonnage* (1838).

The story here is only lightly augmented (from a scholarship point of view) by me with additional, easily available secondary source material. It would be greatly rewarding to learn more of the details of the life of Sir George Collier. - TRW, Jr.

<sup>1</sup> Ithiel Town, comp., *A Detail of Some Particular Services Performed in America, During the Years 1776, 1777, 1778, and 1779*. New York, 1835, p. 51

<sup>2</sup> Fannie S. Chase, *Wiscasset in Pownalborough*. Wiscasset, Maine, 1967, p.242

<sup>3</sup> Town, p. 54

<sup>4</sup> Chase, p. 244

<sup>5</sup> Chase, p.244

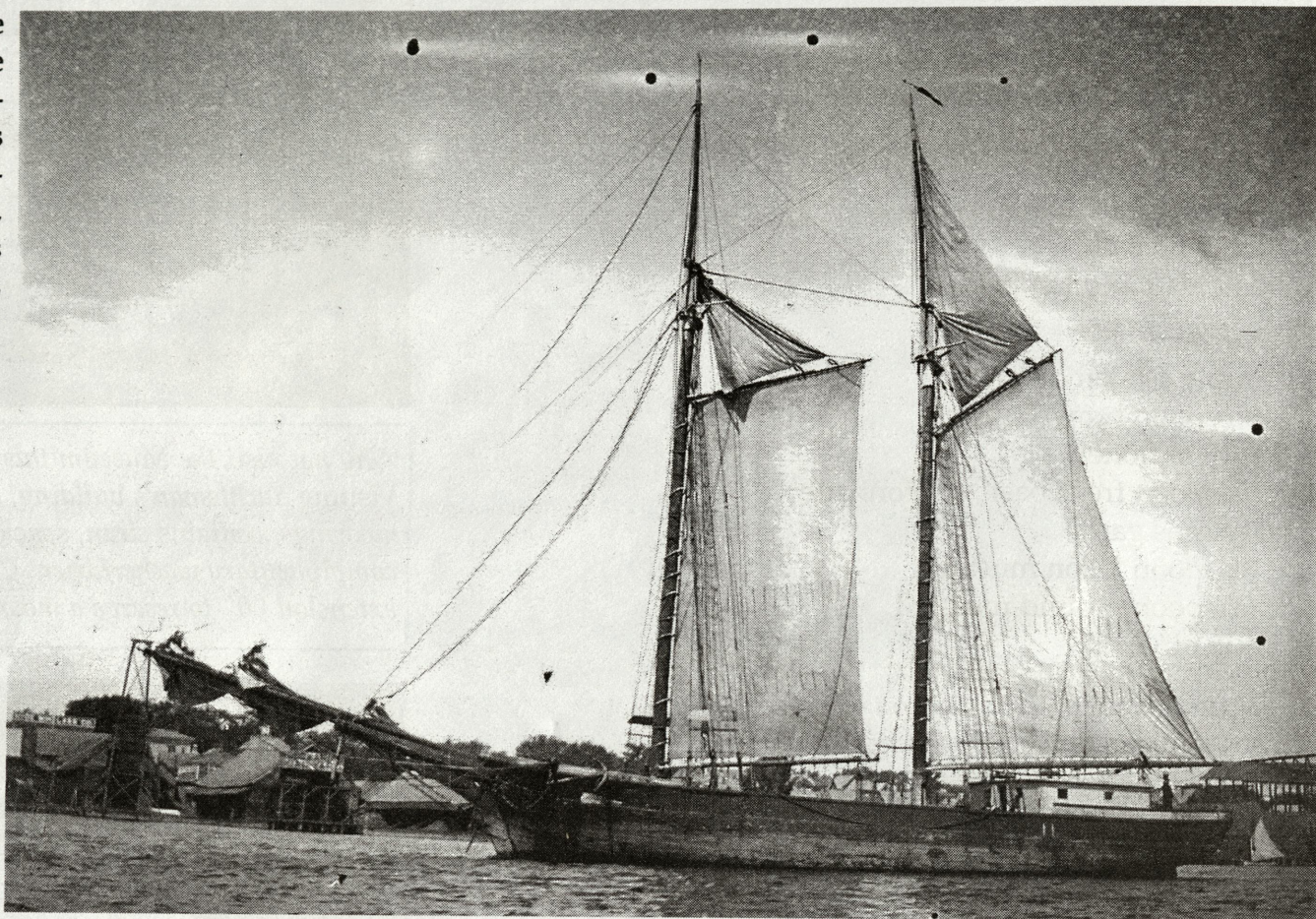
<sup>6</sup> James S. Leamon, *Revolution Downeast*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993, p. 81

<sup>7</sup> Chase, p. 245



# Puzzler From The Library

**A New Puzzler.** Can anyone identify this old schooner? She is at Bath, with several recognizable (and dateable) landmarks nearby. To the right is the ship-house of Bath Iron Works Ltd., built in 1898 and gone 20 years later. Visible under her jibboom is the sign for Hyde Windlass Company, created in 1896. Also seen under her headgear are the buildings of Woodward's Coal Yard, also identified by a sign. Woodward's was out of business by 1905, although the sign may have been left up. So the picture was taken no earlier than 1898, and probably before 1905, although possibly as late at 1917. The schooner is a fairly big two-master with a visible hog in her sheer, and so probably fairly old. She is anchored, and presumably drying her sails, since no crew members are visible furling or setting sail. One man, in white shirt and vest, is standing aft of the house, where a helmsman would stand. Curiously, no wheel or steering gear can be seen. Perhaps that has something to do with why she is anchored opposite Hyde Windlass Company,



manufacturers of steering gear, capstans, windlasses, and other deck machinery. If you recognize the old coaster, please reply to Nathan Lipfert, (207) 443-1316, extension 328, or [lipfert@bath-maine.com](mailto:lipfert@bath-maine.com), or at the Museum's mailing address.

## Last Issue's Puzzler:



Norman Hamlin, Allan Houghton, Henry Keene, Steve Lang, Jim Rives, Lin Snow, Roy Wheeler, and Roger Willock all made suggestions regarding the identification of this gray-looking old tug. All eight suggestions were different. This is not surprising; the Navy and the Coast Guard had a number of similar classes of tugs or tug-like vessels in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. All eight ideas were given careful consideration.

Steve Lang, an acknowledged tug expert, surely has it right with his identification of the vessel as *Acushnet*, built in 1908 by

Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company of Virginia for the Revenue Cutter Service. Operated in the same fashion as a modern cutter, she patrolled the coast, made rescues, did police work at marine events, and broke ice. Based at Woods Hole, she saw the combining of the Revenue Service with the Life Saving Service and the Light House Service to form the modern Coast Guard. In 1917 she was transferred to the Navy, and was returned to the Coast Guard in 1919. In Rockland in February of 1920 for ice-breaking, she went out under pilotage of Capt. John I. Snow to rescue the crew of the concrete freighter *Polias* which had piled up on Old Cilley Ledge off Port Clyde. *Acushnet* came to Rockland again for ice-breaking in March of 1923. This photograph may have been taken on one of those occasions or perhaps at some other time.

This photograph compares well with class photographs in *Jane's Fighting Ships* for 1937 and 1941, and exactly matches details shown in photographs on page 195 of Steve Lang and Peter Spectre's book, *On the Hawser*. Thanks go to Steve and all the others for their help in identifying the picture.

*Acushnet* was again transferred into the Navy in 1936, and was transferred to the Maritime Commission in 1946. She may have ended her days in the mothball fleet.

Nathan R. Lipfert, Curator & Library Director